

January 29, 2025

Dr. Katrina Armstrong, President, Columbia University
Professor Costis Maglaras, Dean, Columbia Business School
Professor Tano Santos, Director, Heilbrunn Center

I am writing to submit my resignation from Columbia University. While this decision has been months in the making, it ultimately became unavoidable.

Teaching at the business school has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. The Value Investing program attracts extraordinary students, and I take pride in having shaped these future investors into well-rounded professionals. The impact my students have had on me is equally profound, and I maintain meaningful relationships with many of them to this day.

The events of October 7, 2023, and the university's subsequent response have made it impossible for my conscience to justify remaining at Columbia. Initially, I found myself making excuses: that these were misguided students, that they were merely exercising free speech, that the university was caught unprepared, that the protesters were primarily outsiders. But these rationalizations can no longer mask what has become inexcusable and systemic.

The university's decision to appoint Joseph Massad to teach a class on Zionism represents a complete abandonment of academic integrity and unbiased scholarship. This appointment was no oversight – it represents a deliberate choice that aligns with the university's ideology. While freedom of speech is fundamental, it must be accompanied by accountability, particularly when professors openly celebrate violence.

Your statement regarding Massad's conduct was both inadequate and disingenuous. His comments were not mere slip-ups that, as you said, "created pain for many in our community and contributed to the deep controversy on our campus." Rather, they represent his consistent worldview, one he continues to promote through interviews, podcasts, and articles. He stands as a celebrated figure in the intifada movement – a status that Columbia now continues to endorse.

I previously believed that maintaining a Zionist voice within the faculty was crucial. However, the university has made its position clear by platforming and empowering a known radical antisemite to indoctrinate impressionable minds. Columbia has revealed itself to be complicit in this ideological agenda. I have also come to understand that Columbia's role as an epicenter of the intifada movement in the United States is no accident, but rather the result of years of institutional cultivation from within the university and from external actors. I urge you to read this detailed report found at canarymission.org/campaign/Columbia_Intifada. To be clear, my disappointment is with Columbia University only and not with the business school.

I have diligently completed Columbia's mandatory anti-harassment training several times, and I am certain that Massad's statements about Israel, Jews, and Zionism violate these very policies. Had I created such "pain for many and contributed to deep controversy," my dismissal would have been swift and justified.

As a top-rated professor whose Credit Superhighway class has become integral and mandatory to the Value Investing program, and as a recipient of the Robert W. Lear Service Award for dedication to student success, I have consistently emphasized ethics and values. I teach my students that their actions must withstand scrutiny and align with both their personal and their clients' values. I must now hold myself to these same standards.

Columbia's values are fundamentally incompatible with my own. I can no longer maintain my association with this institution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Avi Friedman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Avi Friedman
Former Adjunct Professor of Finance
Columbia Business School